AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:

LISTING OF CLAIMS:

1. (currently amended): A tape cartridge which can be inserted into a tape drive having an opening member which can operatively engage with the tape cartridge at a time when the tape cartridge is inserted, the tape cartridge comprising:

a reel on which a tape is wound;

a leader pin attached to a free end of the tape;

a case which is hollow, which accommodates the reel, and which has a ceiling plate and a floor plate which oppose one another with a predetermined interval therebetween;

a tape access opening provided at the case; ~~and~~

pin holding structures for releasably holding the leader pin at a predetermined holding position within the case, such that the leader pin spans between the ceiling plate and the floor plate; ~~,~~ and

a shielding member which can move reciprocatingly along an arc-shaped path of movement between a closing position for closing the tape access opening and an opening position for opening the tape access opening,

wherein a thickness of a portion of the ceiling plate and a portion of the floor plate which each may be contacted by an end surface of the leader pin which is positioned at the holding position, is thicker than an average thickness of the ceiling plate and the floor plate.

2. (currently amended): The tape cartridge of claim 1, wherein the thickness of the portion of the ceiling plate and the portion of the floor plate at least 2.3 mm.~~is 2.3 mm or more.~~

3. (original): The tape cartridge of claim 1, wherein the holding position is in a vicinity of the tape access opening within the case.

4. (original): The tape cartridge of claim 1, wherein the case has a front wall portion facing in a cartridge insertion direction, a side wall portion substantially parallel to the cartridge insertion direction, and an inclined wall portion connecting the front wall portion and the side wall portion and inclined with respect to the cartridge insertion direction, and

the tape access opening is provided at the inclined wall portion of the case.

5. (original): The tape cartridge of claim 1, wherein the pin holding structure has an elastic member which has a free end portion and a proximal portion, and which is for pushing the leader pin by the free end portion and positioning the leader pin at the holding position.

6. (canceled).

7. (currently amended): The tape cartridge of claim 1~~6~~, further comprising an urging element which always urges the shielding member toward the closing position.

8. (currently amended): The tape cartridge of claim 16, further comprising an operation portion provided at the shielding member, and due to the tape cartridge being inserted, the operation portion can move the shielding member toward the opening position while engaging with the opening member of the tape drive.

9. (original): The tape cartridge of claim 1, wherein the case is substantially rectangular in plan view.

10. (original): The tape cartridge of claim 1, wherein

the case is formed from an upper case and a lower case; and

a plurality of joining portions for joining the upper case and the lower case are provided at the case.

11. (currently amended): A tape drive into which a tape cartridge can be inserted, and which carries out at least one of reading of data and writing of data, the tape cartridge having:

a reel on which a tape is wound;

a leader pin attached to a free end of the tape;

a case which is hollow, which accommodates the reel, and which has a ceiling plate and a floor plate which oppose one another with a predetermined interval therebetween;

a tape access opening provided at the case; and

pin holding structures for releasably holding the leader pin at a predetermined holding position within the case, such that the leader pin spans between the ceiling plate and the floor plate,

wherein a thickness of a portion of the ceiling plate and a portion of the floor plate which each may be contacted by an end surface of the leader pin which is positioned at the holding position, is thicker than an average thickness of the ceiling plate and the floor plate, and

the tape drive has an opening member which can operatively engage with the tape cartridge at a time when the tape cartridge is inserted,

wherein the opening member enters into the case at the time when the tape cartridge is inserted.

12. (original): The tape drive of claim 11, wherein, at the time when the tape cartridge is inserted, the opening member engages with a shielding member and can move the shielding member toward an opening position.

13. (original): The tape drive of claim 11, wherein the opening member extends in a direction traversing a tape cartridge insertion direction.

14. (canceled).

15. (currently amended): The tape drive of claim 114, wherein the opening member enters in from a slit provided at the case.

16. (new): A tape cartridge which can be inserted into a tape drive having an opening member which can operatively engage with the tape cartridge at a time when the tape cartridge is inserted, the tape cartridge comprising:

a reel on which a tape is wound;

a leader pin attached to a free end of the tape;

a case which is hollow, which accommodates the reel, and which has a ceiling plate and a floor plate which oppose one another with a predetermined interval therebetween;

a tape access opening provided at the case; and

pin holding structures for releasably holding the leader pin at a predetermined holding position within the case, such that the leader pin spans between the ceiling plate and the floor plate,

wherein a thickness of a portion of the ceiling plate and a portion of the floor plate which each may be contacted by an end surface of the leader pin which is positioned at the holding position, is thicker than an average thickness of the ceiling plate and the floor plate, and

wherein the pin holding structure has an elastic member which has a free end portion and a proximal portion, and which is for pushing the leader pin by the free end portion and positioning the leader pin at the holding position.